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ART. I. — *Sketches of Modern Literature and Eminent Literary Men (being a Gallery of Literary Portraits)*.
By GEORGE GILFILLAN. Reprinted entire from the
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IN a recent article on the Progress of Society, we represented the present age as characterized beyond all preceding times by professed reverence for intellectual attainments and achievements, but as still grossly deficient in that spiritual culture, without which intellect lacks its true nobility, and falls short of its mission and destiny. We propose now to point out some of the intellectual characteristics and tendencies of our times. The aim, indeed, seems at first sight vast and vague; but our discussion will be greatly simplified and brought within reasonable bounds, if, instead of attempting to enumerate in detail all the prominent features of the age, we fix its position, and unfold the principles which inspire its life and direct its energies. In order to do this, we must consider the route in which, and the ends for which, the intellectual effort and enterprise of civilized man have hitherto been directed.

The ages that are gone have been busy chiefly about the material world, — grappling with problems presented by the outward universe. Man awoke into being, surrounded by baffling mysteries. He found himself among existences and objects whose origin, uses, adaptations, and harmonies it surpassed his skill to trace, — beneath heavens whose cir-

cuits, though obviously connected with his welfare, daily presented more and more perplexing intricacies, — over depths which filled him with awe as they quaked and heaved beneath him, and inflamed his cupidity, as they disclosed their glittering treasures for his use and ornament. On his soul was written the divine mandate, — “Subdue the world, and use it.” He had the consciousness of lordship, even while he trembled in ignorance before his meanest subject. And in establishing his supremacy over the material creation, he has been conducting three distinct, yet concurrent, mental processes, from the creation until now.

The first and lowest, yet in some aspects the most essential of these processes, has been that of mechanical invention, which commenced with the rude needlework of our first parents in Eden, grew into distinct arts and trades among the unspiritual posterity of Cain, has given increased power, wealth, and luxury to every successive generation, and now culminates in the mighty Babels that weave raiment for the world, — in the steam-ship that stems the Atlantic storms, — in the harnessed lightning that rides post from city to city.

The second process has been that of philosophy, which, while practical skill has wrought on things known, has toiled in the realm of the unknown, sought out occult causes and harmonies, and laid bare the springs of nature’s mechanism. For the first five thousand years of human history, philosophy floundered in palpable darkness, made a hundred blunders to one discovery, and was completely outstripped by practical skill, which seized on the obvious uses of many portions of creation, the nature of which was utterly unknown. The Jews, who, till the Christian era, alone believed in one God, were but little addicted to philosophical speculation. The nations that loved to investigate the causes of things believed in many jarring and malignant deities, holding joint or conflicting sway over the various departments of nature; and they had not, therefore, even the idea of unity, harmony, design, or adaptation, to guide them in their researches, and to lead them to look upon every part of the system in its relation to other parts or to the great whole. Indeed, it took a full thousand or fifteen hundred years after the Christian era for the human mind to become so imbued with the belief of one God, as to make this fundamental truth of theol-

ogy an axiom of science, — a stage of progress marked by the gradual development, and at length by the full enunciation, of the inductive philosophy. But so soon as man awoke to the distinct consciousness of the beneficent harmony that pervades the universe, science stood firm upon the earth, and measured the heavens. The track of sun and star has been marked by human compasses; unwieldy Jupiter has been tumbled into the scales, while the vibrations of the harp-string have been counted, and the shape of the dew-drop and the falling tear expressed in algebraic formulas. The recent discovery of Le Verrier's planet has affixed the irrefragable seal of verity both to the established theory of the universe and the modern apparatus of mathematical analysis, while the resolution of many of the nebulæ by means of the Earl of Rosse's telescope has driven back the chaotic wave that threatened to sweep over the whole domain of physical astronomy, and to carry us back to a cosmogony as wild and vague as that of Lucretius. As we now look through the universe, we can find no fact which cannot be traced to its class and its law; and though there are unquestionably higher generalizations to be reached, we still have attained a point at which ignorance no longer stimulates inquiry.

The third process referred to is that of the imagination in poetry and fiction. It has been in the region of the unknown that fancy has built her chambers of imagery. In the earlier times, when all the ordinary phenomena of nature were wrapped in mystery, fancy could find vacant room enough for her creations about the daily path and among the familiar incidents of common life. The great poems of antiquity derived their interest from marvels which have now ceased to find a place in prose. The management of the expedition of the Argonauts, achieved by the joint and most potent aid of celestial and infernal deities, would not now transcend the scope of a passed midshipman, and of the heroes of the Trojan war few would rise above the rank and file of a modern army. The Odyssey is founded on the mysteries and perils of a coasting voyage, which one of our New England skippers would make alone in a sail-boat, and deem it no matter of wonder or boasting. Meeting the other day with a shipmaster, who had recently passed through the Strait of Messina, to get a load of salt at a Sicilian port,

we made eager inquiries after Scylla and Charybdis. He assured us that he had never heard of either, said that he found ample sea-room and safe navigation through the strait, and could not tell what the old poets meant by filling so comfortable a ship's track with supernatural terrors.

After science had begun to clear away the mystery and awe that rested on outward nature, superstition still had a strong hold, not only on the ignorant, but among the lettered and refined ; and even those who had themselves outgrown ideas of this class have sympathized sufficiently with the popular mind to enjoy imagery founded upon them. Accordingly, since the classic mythology yielded place, demons, fairies, supernatural appearances and interpositions, have furnished, almost up to our own day, ample materials for romance and poetry ; and there has been full enough of nature left unappropriated by art and unexplored by philosophy for the free range of fancy. But this is the case no longer. Art and science have driven the imagination from her last earthly covert, — have let in broad daylight upon her lurking-places, — have supplanted her world of chimeras and fantastic forms by a world of stiff, stubborn, angular facts, which she can neither bend nor mould.

Here, then, we have the true position of our age. We have subdued and mastered the material universe. We have availed ourselves of its uses, registered its laws, and shaken out its mysteries. We stand where we were made to stand, — at the summit of this lower creation. We are at an era of high attainment, which the ages that are gone had hopelessly longed to reach. No wonder, then, that boastfulness presents itself among the prominent characteristics of our times. There are, indeed, other worlds to be conquered, and sublimer elevations to be scaled ; but, though it be ungraceful, is it unnatural that we should pause for a while, and look down ? Ours is indeed a boastful age. How ready we are to scorn the treasured wisdom of vanished generations, and to look back on the men of former times as if they had been mere barbarians, forgetting that the slavery and the wars of our day will come to be regarded with unmingled detestation and horror, as no less marks of the lowest grade of civilization than cannibalism seems to us now ! But self-gratulation, self-praise, now tinges every expression of the general mind. The giant strides, which the

last few years have taken in all the arts of life and in the sciences on which they rest, make the age a golden one, in the eyes of all who regard material prosperity as the supreme good ; and those who think that they occupy a higher point of view are prone to look on the newly invented moral machinery of the day as perfect in its workings, and on the point of exterminating all inequality, wrong, and evil, unmindful that crime is growing beneath the reformer's fingers, and the rankest harvest of iniquity springing up in the wake of the radicalist's plough. We think proudly of the age, because we measure it for the most part by a material standard, and not by its spiritual attainments and promise. But the next generation will be as humble as we are boastful ; for it will have become accustomed to the elevation that makes us giddy, and will begin to look with earnest aspiration upon the loftier and more arduous heights at the foot of which we stand, — even as the dwellers in the vales of Switzerland make slight account of the hundreds of feet that lift them above the sea, while they feed their flocks at the base of inaccessible, cloud-encircled cliffs.

Our age is also eminently utilitarian, in the lowest sense of the word. The powers of outward nature are so fully developed, and in such vigorous exercise, as to claim a disproportionate share of men's time and energies. Such great mechanical inventions are yet recent, such marvellous applications of science to art are among the wonders, or rather, have ceased to be the wonders, of the day, that most persons talk, reason, and feel, as if the rapid creation of value were the test of genius, the supreme end of being, and the crowning purpose of life. Man is looked upon as a mechanical power, and men educate themselves for the same uses to which they consecrate spinning-jennies and steam-boilers. Certain intellectual traits and endowments a man must have, in order to be a successful producer, for mere bone and muscle can no longer work out valuable results ; in modern mills, a wise child can outgrind an unreasoning Samson. But with regard to the elements of a more spiritual culture, the question is virtually asked, — “ What is their market value ? Will they help me make better, or sell more, goods ? Will they tell on 'change, or have weight at the stock-board ? Will they make me sharper at a bargain, or wiser as to my investments ? ” Money-scales are made to answer

all uses, and the balance of the sanctuary seldom has the dust shaken from its beam.

A day or two after Washington Allston's death, we occupied a seat in a railroad car behind a spruce *jobber* from Kilby street, who was expounding to his wife (who with a woman's truer instinct seemed aware that a great man had fallen), that Allston's decease would not be *half so much felt* as that of any common business man about the city; for, said he, "I do not suppose that he circulated in all his life so much money as we sometimes take in a single week." This piece of stupidity, which the man might have been too shrewd to utter for any other ear, tells the whole story of the too frequent indifference and contempt with which the fine arts are treated in this country, and of the dearth throughout the civilized world, in this age of traffic, of artists whose works are likely to live. We often find the artist regarded simply as the complement of the carpenter and upholsterer. Pictures and statues are *done* to order, to fill up architectural vacancies, or to supply the absence of columns or curtains, instead of demanding room and a welcome, because they sprang from the artist's own inspiration. On no other ground could the rotunda of our national Capitol have been defaced by the sacrilegious caricature of the baptism of Pocahontas, — the work of that Chapman, who has since executed the Harpers' brilliant travesty of the Ho'y Scriptures. A similar stubborn determination to have a group of statuary where something seemed lacking on the front of the Capitol could alone have licensed the figure of that respectable old gentleman, with an orange in his hand, standing in no very delicate juxtaposition with a pretty young lady dressed as was Eve in Eden, which, by "making believe a great deal," and practising with closed eyes, the frequenters of the premises have at length learned to regard as representing Columbus, as he startles a sleeping aboriginal beauty by his rapture on discovering the roundness of the world. On the other hand, that noble master-work of Greenough — false to the ideal of Washington only because it suggests a more than human majesty of soul, and might well represent the highest achievement of Christian art, with Jupiter Tonans for its seedling conception — is left by the collected wisdom of the nation in a leaky shanty outside the Capitol walls, not because there is no room for it within, but

because there is no place that specially needs to be thus filled.

We may trace the workings of this same grovelling utilitarianism in the gradual decline of classical learning. The scholar is challenged in vain to produce a philosopher's stone which can transmute the dead languages into gold ; and, as business letters never need to be written, or orders made or answered, in Latin or Greek, they are pronounced useless by multitudes of those who ought to know better, and the generous nurture that they may give to the higher powers and finer susceptibilities of youth is disdained and rejected. Meanwhile, as Horace says was the case in his day,

"Pueri longis rationibus assem
Discunt in partes centum diducere."

And with regard to many of the most approved and popular maxims and modes of education, we may well ask with the same poet, —

"An, hæc animos ærugo et cura peculi
Quum semel imbuerit, speramus, carmina fingi
Posse linenda cedro, et levi servanda cupresso?"

Again, in an intellectual point of view, ours is a peculiarly unproductive age. There seems to be very little of vigorous, independent thought. On subjects on which the mind ought to be the most active, reading to a great degree takes the place of thinking, and one is very apt to be of the opinion of the last author that he has read. Men, too, reason in platoons, and hold belief and sentiment in joint-stock corporations, — in corporations for the most part with fictitious capital ; for the draft, when made, for solid reasons and arguments, betrays a missing treasurer. Public opinion, sourceless as the wind, groundless as moonshine, is the tyrant ; individual intellect, the supple sycophant, the passive slave. If a man gets a new idea, he goes out into the street to ask if there is any thing in it, or looks up to the high places to inquire whether any of the rulers or chief-priests have believed thus ; and if his thought finds no echo, it seldom occurs to him to compare it with his own intuitions, to analyze it by his own subtilty, or to verify it by his own experience. This indifference to the higher forms of thought results, no doubt, from the vast amount of indisputable material philosophy and

wisdom now in the possession of civilized man, in the process of being used up, and promising to supply the practical demands and outward wants of the race for centuries to come.

The prevalent tastes of the reading community indicate a similarly low intellectual standard. The writer who would have the world's suffrages must employ himself in reducing the strong meat of manly minds to the neutral savour and pulpy consistency demanded by the feeble organs of mental infancy. A very large portion of the literary energy of the age is employed in writing history, and that not philosophical, but merely entertaining history, biographical gossip, insignificant detail, fragmentary, episodical narrative, which, so far from aiding in the search for ultimate causes and principles, heaps up piles of impertinent rubbish in the inquirer's path. If the public press may be taken as an exponent of the general mind, the collecting and compiling no matter what from the annals of the past is deemed the most dignified and momentous pursuit that a man can be engaged in. How cursory notice is given to a really profound work, at least in any journal short of a quarterly ! If the book is seriously argumentative, it is passed by as obscure and dull. If novel in its speculations, it is denounced as heretical, with garbled specifications, and the shades of free and noble thinkers, who were in advance of their own times and loved bold thought, are evoked to utter anathemas upon the offending author. But does a man publish some pitiful town history, and is he enabled by the careful collation of ancient records to ascertain the precise length of Governor Endicott's beard, or the dimensions of the first meeting-house in Rowley, or the names and accounts of the earliest tythingman and pound-keeper of Dedham, he bends under a whole forest of newspaper laurels, — he is doing noble service to his land and his race, — it is of such materials as these, that the future historian, who has been promised us ever since we can remember, is to build the imperishable monument of our country's renown.

Meantime, how vast the issues of the groaning press ! “Of the making of many books there is no end” ; but the process is, for the most part, or rather for the wisest and best part, the decanting of old wine into new bottles, even according to the good words of Chaucer, —

“Out of the olde fieldes, as men saithe,
Cometh all this newe corn fro yere to yere;
And out of olde bookes, in good faithe,
Cometh all this newe science that men lere.”

Of such books as feed thought and nourish intellect our times can number few; nor does there seem to be, in any department of literature, or in the higher walks of intellectual research, any leading and controlling mind, as there has almost always been before. The firmament shows no morning-star that outshines all the rest, but a galaxy, with here and there a brighter patch of light from a cluster of luminaries. Nor do we trace in many quarters that spirit of devout and earnest inquiry, that deep solemnity of soul in the contemplation of truth, before which the veil always parts and the empire of the unknown recedes. Two or three great works we have, indeed, had from beyond the Atlantic within as many years. Whewell and Mill (whose labors have been already noticed in our pages), in some respects antagonists in their philosophy, and the latter a much less careful reasoner and safe guide than the former, have done more than any other living English writers to replenish the fountains of fresh and vigorous thought. Their works go down to the very foundations of knowledge, to the roots of thought and theory; but they fail of meeting the general taste of the republic of letters, on account of their utter lack of false rhetoric, amplified or diluted statements, and illustrations drawn from the way-side of busy life. Whewell's *History and Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, though cursorily commended in a recent number of this journal, have not, we believe, found the courtesy of an elaborate notice in any American periodical; and his *Elements of Morality* have in two or three instances been reviewed with a superciliousness and wrong-headedness which indicated either the indifference of a hireling critic, or an utter inability to rise to the author's point of view and to appreciate his labors.

The German mind is, indeed, commonly deemed more active at the present time than the Anglo-Saxon, and it certainly grapples with higher themes of thought. But we doubt whether, since Goethe and Richter have passed off the stage, there remains any rival, of their fame, as an original and creative mind, in any department whatsoever. German books, on all subjects of archæology, criticism, philosophy,

and theology, display, indeed, prodigious learning. But so far as our limited acquaintance with German literature extends, its greatest achievements of the present day are of three classes. First, there are works which present, with little method or system, compends of all that can be read or known on a given subject. Secondly, there are numerous works which revive old and often exploded theories, and attempt to sustain them by excerpts, frequently garbled and distorted, from the erudition of all past ages. Then, thirdly, a new theory, so *outré* and absurd, that neither the author himself nor any of his readers can be supposed to have even a momentary faith in it, is often started on some subject, on which the true doctrine has long been established beyond dispute, and this strange theory is made a nucleus for the crystallization of old learning in new and eccentric forms, — the sole object being the exhibition of a startling piece of intellectual jugglery, which shall transfix the literary world with the same kind of admiration with which the less enlightened multitude see a man stand on his head, or balance a cart-wheel on his chin. Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, reviewed in our number for October, belongs to this latter class. Its origin is, no doubt, to be accounted for on this wise. Niebuhr (the example of whose confiding faith in historical Christianity is made doubly precious by his extreme skepticism in the weighing of testimony) had applied the most profound and scientific criticism to the heterogeneous compound of fact and fable that bore the name of Roman history, exposed numberless fallacies in the evidence on which the faith of all preceding ages had implicitly rested, and reconstructed with the hand of a master-builder the fabric and fortunes of the great republic. Strauss, emulous of his fame, and yet lacking the enterprise to go beyond the range of his own department of learning, has brought into a period of authentic history the critical instruments which Niebuhr most aptly employed about the traditions of a fabulous age. The work, intellectually considered, is a scientific blunder, — as much so as it would be to apply mechanical reasoning to facts in chemistry, or algebraic formulas to the solution of ethical problems; for the mode of investigation adapted to dateless and anonymous legends from ages that have transmitted no written history differs *toto cælo* from that which belongs to records about the date and authorship of which there hangs

no mystery, and to an age of which the events and statistics are familiarly known.

We pass to the aspect of our times as to works of the imagination. It has been often said, that an epic poem is no longer possible. This we believe ; for no man living has sufficient faith in the commingling of any class of intermediate supernatural agencies with the common affairs of life to furnish the machinery for an epic. Nay, even could a work of this class be elaborated with the highest degree of artistic skill, and its supernatural machinery adjusted with the closest fidelity to the best models, it is doubtful whether it would find readers. We must feel that the poet writes in good faith, in order to enjoy his creations. Had the *Henriade* been anonymous, it would have passed unchallenged to a secondary place among the works of its class ; but we can never forget, while we read it, that it is the unbelieving, scoffing, sneering Voltaire that is pulling the wires of a machinery which he denied and scorned. Had the *Paradise Lost*, with its half-pagan demonology, been written in our own day, it would not be read with the whole-hearted admiration, with the intense earnestness of spirit, which it now commands the more with every new perusal ; for we should all the while suspect the author's good faith, and the artificial, heartless process by which we should suppose the poem to have been written would leave its trail on all the gorgeous description and splendid imagery. As it stands, the *Paradise Lost* is to us what every true poem is, — the belief, the spirit, the image of its age and people, uttering itself through its heaven-attested seer ; and through it we not only behold the fantastic creations with which it swarms, which without contact with humanity have no charm for us, but we are borne back to the age when such creations were possible and credible, we enter for the time into the then current faith, and glow with the hopes and fears, the visions and the musings, that then dwelt deep in the general heart, and quickened the throbbings of the general pulse.

We now can no more recall, in separate forms of fancy and sources of inspiration,

“ The power, the beauty, and the majesty
That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and watery depths.”

Dreary, prosaic fact has established its empire in glade, forest, and cavern, — over land, sea, and air, — and has banished spiritual essences from these lower skies. To supply the lost inspiration, various tricks are resorted to. Some have recourse to fantastic language, high-flown epithets, and artificially extravagant moods of mind, and ply in full sight of their readers every stroke of the scourge by which they lash themselves up to a most preposterous state of poetical frenzy. Others strew thickly over a mass of unmeaning platitudes impassioned words fresh from the dictionary, and present a caricature of poetic sentiment, that reminds one of the hideous contortions of muscles in the countenance of a galvanized corpse. Others, like Mrs. Hemans, only less gracefully, write on all classes of subjects, “in strains that sigh and words that weep,” and derive their sole claim to a place on Parnassus from this morbid pathos, this maudlin sensibility, so alien from all actual experience that by its very strangeness it passes for inspiration. Others there are, indeed, both in poetry and in fiction, who anticipate the advent of a better age by creations instinct with a tenderly humane, philanthropic, and devout spirit. But the few truly great poets of our day are less creative than descriptive. Thus, Wordsworth betrays little creative fancy, but the keenest, gentlest, kindest powers of observation, intense sympathy with every form of life and mood of feeling, and a sacred harmony with the indwelling spirit that fills the universe with beauty and with glory. Similar endowments, with hardly less delicacy of perception, but with a more masculine tone and a stronger intellectual fibre, place Sterling (who ought to be more largely known), and our countrymen Bryant and Longfellow, among the first living poets, among whom, however, it is difficult to assign rank and to mark the degrees of glory.

To pass to another topic, our age undeniably manifests strong skeptical tendencies. There is, indeed, but little professed and blasphemous infidelity, unless we give that name (as we feel no hesitation in doing) to the *Straussian* forms of (so called) faith. But there is (if we may thus employ the name of an old Jewish sect) an abounding *Sadducism*, — a disposition to believe, trust, and enjoy only things that can be seen and handled, — an aversion to spiritual contemplation and spiritual truth, — an unwillingness to entertain subjects of

thought drawn from the soul's higher life, from revelation, or from the dread mysteries of a future state. These tendencies result from the false position which we occupy with regard to the region of the unseen and the spiritual. That lies above and beyond ; the age looks down and back, — is busy in the contemplation of its own attainments, — is in the mood of self-glorification, which of course implies self-trust and self-sufficiency. Man has, within the last generation, wrought so many wonders, and unravelled so many, in the outward world, as to lead to the belief that there can have been no event in the universe beyond the scope of his intellect, or the range of the laws that he has verified. He comprehends in his philosophy the material universe, which, in its immensity, is still finite, and forgets that he is embosomed in a spiritual universe which is infinite. As regards philosophy, therefore, the tendency is to complete, full-orbed systems, which leave nothing unexplained, and admit nothing that cannot be comprehended within simple, obvious, mechanical laws, — characteristics which ought to brand a system as superficial and utterly inadequate. There must needs be in an infinite universe mysteries too deep, too high, for the unaided intellect, — clefts and chasms which it cannot fill ; and for these faith seeks light from a surer wisdom than its own, and rejoicingly welcomes miracle, prophecy, revelation, for its guidance in those arduous paths of research in which “ it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” — in those departments of truth in which reason has not of itself sufficient premises or data, and therefore cannot assure itself of its own conclusions. Never was more needed than at this culminating era of material philosophy and science the prayer of Lord Bacon : — “ This also we humbly and earnestly beg ; that human things may not prejudice such as are divine ; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, any thing may arise of incredulity or intellectual night towards divine mysteries ; but rather that by our minds thoroughly purged and cleansed from fancy and vanity, and yet subject and perfectly given up to the divine oracles, there may be given unto faith the things that are faith's.”

Such are some of the characteristics of our age. The view that we have presented is by no means so discouraging as it might at first sight seem ; for the tendencies which we

regret may be speedily reversed, while the ground that we have gained need not be retrodden. Our position is one eminently favorable to the future and rapid progress of humanity, — one, from which the race may advance with accelerated speed in all the elements of spiritual knowledge, freedom, and power. In ancient fable, the Titans piled mountain upon mountain that they might reach the celestial seats ; and when they began to climb, the angry king of the gods hurled them and their unwieldy scaffolding to the ground. We stand, as they did, upon the tops of the mountains, and the broad earth, the vast universe, lies beneath us ; but for us they furnish a solid foothold from which we can mount the skies, and the Infinite Father stretches out the hand to help those who have subdued the earth to scale the heavens. The spiritual world lies all open for our research and activity. It is in this that industry must toil, science explore, fancy create ; and we trust that the engrossing demands of the material world will soon give place to higher fields of research and modes of effort. Let us now cast a cursory glance at the work which remains to be wrought in coming ages, and in which we trust that our own will begin to bear part.

First, the practical skill, which has almost exhausted its resources in the material world, must apply itself to the re-organization of human society. That the social system is out of joint is only too obvious. Here are the vast masses of superfluous and unproductive wealth ; there the crowded ranks of the suffering, the starving, the degraded, the enslaved, for whom no healing or restoring influence has ever gone forth. These are the valleys to be exalted ; those the mountains to be brought low. War, still the scourge of a guilty world, must be put away, and the principles of peace, forbearance, equity, and good faith brought down to the details of domestic and social life, and thence (for it can be only thence) infused into the machinery of governments and the counsels of nations. Grovelling toil, both among the sordid rich and the hunger-driven poor, must be made to relax its demands and to equalize its burdens, so that in all classes of society the mind and heart shall claim their rights and have their dues, — their sufficient space and means for culture and enjoyment. These ends are not, as we suppose, to be reached by any violent convulsion, outbreak, or revolution.

On the old Jewish temple was heard no sound of axe or hammer ; still less will there be on the tabernacle of God, as its stakes are planted, and its curtains spread over the regenerated earth. Nor have we the slightest faith in Fourierism, or in any of the plans for creating a social machinery which shall move aright by its own momentum. We do not believe that Providence ever meant that human institutions and arrangements should produce the highest results by their own independent and self-adjusting action. It is essential to our best moral discipline, that the bands, wheels, and pulleys of the social machine should be constantly liable to be thrown out of gear and out of play, and should thus need weights of our own addition and compensations of our own device, — the incessant and vigorous exercise of our best powers of mind and heart.

Meanwhile, philosophy has its appointed work, still unwrought, in the spiritual universe. Man has measured the heights and sounded the depths of nature, yet still knows not his own soul. The laws of mind, its mutual relations, its connection with the Supreme Intelligence, the harmonies of the spiritual world, the correspondences between nature and revelation, the scientific aspects of nature, the glimpses that reach us from a higher sphere of being, the shadows of a past, and the foreshinings of a future eternity, — these form a field of research on which the human mind has hardly entered, but which, from their vastness, sublimity, and intense interest, may well demand and tax to the utmost the loftiest powers for unnumbered ages.

Imagination, too, has before her a sphere from which she has hardly begun to draw materials for her creations. In the immensity of the spiritual universe, the realm of the unknown can never vanish. Even revelation gives us only the great outlines of spiritual truth and of the future life ; and may not the details have been withheld, in order that fancy might range at will in the vast expanse thus left open, — that there might be, within the temple-gates of eternal truth, ample scope for the creative faculty of the human soul to build, garnish, and people its own mansions ? In this spiritual world, there will always be mysteries before which science will veil her face, — hidings of omnipotence, which the keenest eye cannot penetrate, — secrets of the future life, which the earthly vision cannot explore. It is in this region

that the fountains of poetic inspiration must henceforth be sought. As in ancient times, the poet's and the prophet's name will again be one. Imagination will thus become the handmaid of devotion, letting in the light of eternity on the toils of time, and filling man's path to heaven with celestial harmonies.

We have completed the discussion which we proposed ; but, as we have taken Gilfillan's book for our text, we feel bound to give a brief notice of it before we close. To use the epithet which Dickens has stamped as an Americanism, this is one of the most *remarkable* books of the age. The author tells us that "the life of every thinking man may be divided into three eras, — the era of admiration, the era of action, and the era of repose." In the work before us, "he has garnered up the results of his young love and wonder for the master-pieces of his country's genius" ; and he informs us, "that, with it, one mental period of his history is closing, and that it is for the public to decide whether he be encouraged to gird up his loins for some other more manlike, more solid, and strenuous achievement." The public, we opine, will very readily connive at his easy transit from the first to the third era. And yet the book is entertaining. The writer seems to have made himself a sort of Boswell general. He has picked up a rich assortment of literary gossip, sat as a humble listener in many learned coteries, heard almost all the great men talk, attended the ministrations of most of the distinguished preachers of England and Scotland, and wormed himself into a knowledge of the personal habits and private history of almost all the originals of his "Gallery of Literary Portraits." Moreover, though the least skilful of portrait-painters, he is by no means unsuccessful. His colors are chosen at random, and his strokes of the brush are mere dabs ; but he piles color upon color, and plies stroke upon stroke, till by dint of reiterated trial he hits a tolerable, though in almost every instance a grossly flattered, likeness. His style is the most stilt-like that has come under our cognizance for many a day. His sentences consist generally of metaphors in threes, fours, or fives, most unequally yoked together. For the incoherent mixture of metaphors we can match him by no parallel within our memory, unless we liken him to Orator Emmons, whose peculiar rhetoric cannot have wholly faded from the memory

of our Boston readers. But the laws of fermentation and combination once in a while enable him to throw together half a dozen bold and striking figures, that really make a splendid sentence, just as every hundredth shake of a kaleidoscope may present a figure of perfect symmetry and surpassing beauty. We are tempted to quote, as a striking and by no means an exaggerated specimen of his style of delineation, the introductory paragraph of his sketch of Robert Hall.

“Robert Hall was the *facile princeps* of English descent [dissent?]. And though his merits have been enshrined and emblazoned in the criticism of Foster, Dugald Stewart, Southey, and John Scott, as well as of Mackintosh and Parr, we may yet, gleaning after them in a field so rich, find a few stray ears. Following in their wake, we may, perchance, pick up a few floating fragments from the wreck of such an argosie. As a preacher, he enjoys the traditional fame of having outstripped all his contemporaries. Some sturdy sons of the Scottish Establishment continued, indeed, long to stand up for the superiority of Chalmers; but their voice, if not drowned, was overwhelmed by the general verdict of public opinion. We believe, however, that, in the mere force of immediate impression, the Scottish preacher had the advantage. The rapidity of Hall’s delivery, the ease with which finished sentences succeeded each other like a shower of pearls, the elevation of the sentiment, the purity of the composition, the earnestness of the manner, the piercing coruscations of the eye, — all these taken together, — produced the effect of thrilling every bosom, and enchaining every countenance. But there lacked the struggle and the agony, the prophetic fury, the *insana vis*, the wild and mystic glance, ‘seeing the invisible,’ and (when the highest point of his oratory was reached) the ‘torrent rapture’ of our countryman, ‘taking the reason prisoner,’ and hurrying the whole being as before a whirlwind. In listening to Hall, you felt as under the influence of the ‘cup which cheers, but not inebriates.’ Hearing Chalmers was like tasting of the ‘insane root.’ Hall’s oratory might be compared to a low but thrilling air; Chalmers’s to a loud and barbaric melody. Hall’s excitement was fitful, varying with the state of his health and feelings; that of Chalmers was constant and screwed up to a prodigious pitch, as if by the force of frenzy. Hall’s inspiration was elegant and Grecian: you said of Chalmers, ‘He hath a demon, if he be not full of the God.’” — pp. 74, 75.

Gilfillan has a genius for comparisons. There are no two

men so unlike, that he cannot put them in juxtaposition ; and there are certain names which, like constant terms in mathematical calculation, he brings forward in his estimate of almost every literary character in his catalogue. Burke and Horsley, for some inscrutable reason, have the precedence among these *common measures*, and are both named in connection with authors who can never have reminded any other living man of either of them. We were going to give a list of the men with whom he compares Robert Hall, but find that it would occupy too much room ; for we have counted forty, without scanning the last few pages very closely. We should do him injustice not to quote a few of his boldest and most original parallels. Thus, — “ Percy Bysshe Shelley, of all the modern poets, with the exception of Coleridge in his youth, reminds us most of Israel’s prophets.” He terms “ Moses Stuart, of Andover University,” a Polyphemus, — why, we know not, unless it be on account of his *single-eyed* devotion to the science of Scriptural exegesis. In considering Channing’s position with reference to American literature, he is “ reminded more of Dr. Johnson than of any other writer.” In his sketch of “ the preachers of the day,” he styles George Croly “ the Burke of theology,” leaving us in some doubt whether he likens him to the great orator of that name, or to the individual of our own day who has rendered the same name illustrious by his liberal contributions to anatomical science.

In a paper which has “ Ralph Waldo Emerson ” for its caption, our author gives us a sketch of the literary men of America. Here the absurdities of his style and manner are heightened by a palpable ignorance of his subject, the absence of which is the one redeeming trait of the residue of his work. We quote the following paragraph as a choice *morceau* of cockney criticism, unparalleled for its impertinence, flippancy, and absurdity.

“ Ere estimating the writer Emerson, we must permit ourselves a glance, however cursory, at the state of American literature. Its inferiority has long been deplored with a bitterness proportioned to the height of the expectations which had been excited. It had been imagined, that, far as the Andes transcend the Alps, minds were to appear in the western hemisphere, so far transcending our Shakspeares and Miltons. Many excellent reasons were given why nature should bear such a progeny ; but

the Mighty Mother continued obstinately deaf to all those attempts to argue her into productiveness. Not a few, indeed, there were whom the puff of a coterie lifted, for a season, out of their place, to sink into obscurity again. 'Dropsies' were, now and then, taken for 'divinities.' Mocking-birds, approaching the perfection of the mimetic art, abounded, and were mistaken for the eagles of Jove. For every native product of Britain, there was a substitute in America, resembling the original, as the gilded and lettered back of a draught-board does a princely volume. For Byron there was a Bryant; for Coleridge a Dana; for Wordsworth a Percival; for Addison a Washington Irving. Those writers, and many others, had varied talents and accomplishments, nay, genius; but it was timid and tottering as a child learning to walk, and sometimes reminded you of a person described by Robert Hall, 'who appeared to go about apologizing to every body for the unpardonable presumption of being in the world.' It did not dare to draw its inspiration from its own woods, because they were not sung; from its own rivers, because, though the light of God's face shown [shone?] on them, that of the 'poet's dream' had not yet consecrated their waters; from its own skies, because, though they pillowed the Andes, they folded over no St. Paul's and no Westminster Abbey; from its own sun, because, though the very sun of Homer and Shakspeare, he went down to their eyes amid the waves of the forest, and not amid those of the Atlantic Sea. It lived on borrowed force. It fed on alms. It was the reverse of a republican genius. It had not even audacity or literary licentiousness; not even the power of extravagance or the life of convulsion. Sometimes it selected for its models writers inferior to its own capabilities, because they were British, and you were reminded of the prophet stretching himself, eye to eye, and foot to foot, upon the child of the Shunamite. Still it has numbered the following great names in its intellectual heraldry;—Edwards, Dwight, Brockden Brown, Cooper, John Neal, Moses Stuart, Daniel Webster, Channing, and Emerson." — pp. 328, 329.

Our readers are welcome to a hearty laugh over this extract; but they would hardly have patience with us, should we offer them a word of commentary on a text which so luculently expounds both itself and its author. Nor would the merits of the book have induced us to dignify it even by our critical ban. We have seen fit to notice it, because in the American reprint it is widely circulated and much read, and because its rich and attractive table of contents, and the unique and happy design of combining within a narrow com-

pass portraits of the leading English writers of the present generation, have undoubtedly led many to take the author's brass for gold, and his paste for diamonds.

ART. II. — *Report on the Census of the Iroquois Indians in the State of New York, taken by Order of the Legislature in 1845.* By HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT. Legislative Document. Albany. 1846. 8vo. pp. 285.

WE have had a great many speculations on the subject of the red men. Where there is ample room and range for conjecture, it most naturally takes a wide scope, — as water, that is not confined to a channel, spreads out broadly, and is often shallow in proportion. No topic connected with the history of man is less circumscribed ; it is almost a *tabula rasa* ; scarcely a fence or a bound is seen to check the range of the speculations we have alluded to. They can expand at will, and most of them have taken advantage of this unbounded latitude. The truth is, there is a great gulf between the post-diluvian main stock of mankind and this branch found in the western hemisphere. Here we advance on the modern side less than four centuries, when we stand on its brink. A few vague traditions, like slender promontories, shoot forward into the shadows beyond. Those who move out on them, in the hope of reaching the other side, are much like the insect which crawls to the tip of a slender blade of grass growing on the western shore of the Southern Pacific, as if in hopes of reaching the Asiatic shore. On the other hand, if we take our stand among the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, we are only told that they were scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. This declaration must be received in all its length and breadth ; still, the gulf is not narrowed one tittle. We can only rest in the conviction, that there are ways past our finding out, and that the way whereby the red men came is one of those ways. We cannot carry forward the chain one link. We can trace it back four hundred years, leaving a vast hiatus of a thousand years. What has been thus sundered no man can expect to join together.